



## Mandate Renewal of the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health

Proposal submitted to the Conference of Deputy Ministers  
of Health (CDM) and the Advisory Committee  
of Deputy Ministers of Education (ACDME)

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## PROPOSAL

The mandate of the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health be renewed (2015-2020).

## RATIONALE

In 2005, Canada's ministers responsible for health and education pioneered a new approach to improving health and learning for school-aged children and youth: the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH). They recognized that, statistically, young people were at risk for a range of physical, psychological, and behavioural challenges – and that these challenges have major implications not only for learning, but also for health care costs.

Today, the JCSH comprises the Ministries of Education and Health in 12 of the 13 provinces and territories<sup>1</sup>. The federal government also supports the work of the Consortium, with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) serving in a funding and advisory capacity.

JCSH is uniquely positioned to facilitate and initiate collaboration across the health and education sectors. The Consortium provides leadership and support to its member governments, enabling the education and health sectors to work together more efficiently and effectively toward their core business outcomes, while also building capacity at a system level for promoting healthier school communities. Among its provincial and territorial membership, it is considered a stable platform to which jurisdictions and sectors can turn in the face of ever-changing priorities, agendas, and emerging trends.

The Consortium focuses on priority areas of FPT Ministers of Health and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada – all of which have key implications for the health and learning outcomes for students, such as healthy weights, mental health and academic achievement. This results in many efficiencies and enhancements that might not otherwise be achieved:

- knowledge exchange and mobilization;
- improved coordination of school health policy and research agendas; and
- the development of evidence-based, user-friendly tools and resources.

The work of the JCSH promotes comprehensive school health: an internationally recognized framework for supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated, holistic and sustainable way. The World Health Organization has concluded that school health programs designed using a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup>Although Quebec shares the concerns and objectives of the JCSH and will continue to contribute by sharing information and leveraging best practices, Quebec intends to remain solely responsible for responding to school health needs within its territory.

school health approach<sup>2</sup> have been found to be the most effective<sup>3</sup>, demonstrating significant improvements in student achievement, behaviour and health outcomes<sup>4</sup>.

At the provincial and territorial levels, support for the comprehensive school health approach is being demonstrated in new ways. For example, Ministries of Education and Health across the country continue to engage in efforts to transform and renew education by incorporating what have traditionally been considered “health” objectives into core strategic and operational goals and planning. Part of this renewal is recognizing that students are best positioned to achieve academically when they are supported in environments that enhance their mental and physical health, their sense of self and belonging, and the skills and supports to make positive choices.

The JCSH has worked across the health and education sectors, in research, policy and practice, to cultivate numerous strategic multi-sector partnerships that promote the use of a comprehensive school health approach to address health and learning outcomes, e.g. :

- Canadian Association of Principals
- Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse
- Canadian Partnership Against Cancer
- Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement / The Students Commission
- Federal/Provincial/Territorial Group on Nutrition (FPTGN)
- Physical and Health Education (PHE) Canada
- Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet)
- Queen’s University – Social Program Evaluation Group
- University of Waterloo – Propel Centre for Population Health Impact
- University of New Brunswick – Health and Education Research Group

The work that has resulted from these multi-sector partnerships includes the development, refinement and piloting of many evidence-based, sustainable tools and resources used in schools, school districts and health regions across the country. The collaborative development process behind each of these tools and resources has ensured that their development has benefited from the input and experience of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners working in the health and education sectors in provinces and territories across the country. Furthermore, significant cost efficiencies have been realized, and duplication of efforts has been minimized, as a result of this highly collaborative process. Examples of some of JCSH’s key tools and resources include:

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<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization website. Available at [www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/en/). Accessed April 16, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Stewart-Brown, S. (2006). What is the evidence on school health promotion in improving health or preventing disease and, specifically, what is the effectiveness of the health promoting schools approach? Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe (Health Evidence Network report; <http://www.euro.who.int/document/e88185.pdf>, accessed April 16, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). Student Health and Academic Achievement. Accessed April 16, 2014 from [http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health\\_and\\_academics/](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/).

- **Comprehensive School Health Framework – (2008)**  
*Includes four distinct but inter-related pillars to be considered when taking action for improved health and learning in the school and school community.*
- **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey (HBSC) – (Ongoing)**  
*JCSH facilitated expansion of the HBSC sample size in the 2009-10 cycle, which provided provincial- and territorial-level data to interested JCSH member jurisdictions for the first time. HBSC data provides Ministries of Health and Education with evidence to support collaborative strategic planning to address their shared mandates of student success and well-being.*
- **Healthy School Planner – (Revised 2013)**  
*An online tool schools can use to assess the health of their school and build a plan for a healthier school community, including the “how-to” of healthy school planning and comprehensive school health, and topic-specific modules on healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use and positive mental health.*
- **Schools as a Setting for Promoting Positive Mental Health (1st and 2nd Editions – 2010; 2013) and Positive Mental Health Toolkit – (2012)**  
*An interactive, comprehensive collection of resources, better practices and practical tips for promoting positive mental health in the school setting and greater school community. Available in hard copy and online.*
- **Youth Engagement Toolkit – (2013)**  
*An online, interactive “how-to” resource of effective practices to support youth engagement and leadership in schools, school boards and districts, government ministries, health regions, and community organizations.*
- **Core Indicators and Measures: Comprehensive School Health and Student Achievement – (2013)**  
*Provides evidence of, and indicators on, the use of a comprehensive school health approach and its impacts on student achievement/success.*

Ever mindful of its representation in two related but diverse sectors with mandates to support the achievement/success and wellness/well-being of Canada’s children and youth, the JCSH recognizes that strategic directions in school health have shifted over the years.

Whereas previous JCSH mandates have included a focus on specific health issues and risk factors to be addressed, a renewed mandate would provide the Consortium the opportunity to build upon the considerable partnerships and collaborations, efficiencies, tools, resources, and learnings realized to date. More specifically, and in keeping with its commitment to monitoring emerging trends and opportunities in the health and education sectors, a renewed mandate would allow the Consortium to:

- Build upon and strengthen the evidence base between student wellness/well-being and student achievement/success, addressing this relationship in a more deliberate and integrated fashion;

- Promote, disseminate, implement and evaluate the many tools and resources it has only recently piloted and launched, further supporting its member jurisdictions in effecting positive change in healthy school communities across the country;
- Build upon existing and establish new multi-sector, multi-jurisdictional partnerships and learnings, and the resulting collective wisdom that informs planning for healthier school communities in Canada today, and into the future;
- Leverage the work of, and forge stronger connections with, other pan-Canadian governmental tables that are complementary to the JCSH (e.g. Pan-Canadian Public Health Network's *Healthy People and Communities Steering Committee*)
- Promote efficiencies in data collection, and reduce burden on the school system, by increasing opportunities for collaboration in student health and education surveys and assessments;
- Explore opportunities for engagement with Aboriginal organizations regarding if and how they might participate in the work of the JCSH;
- Refine JCSH initiatives such that they continue to be more responsive to evolving priorities in the education and health sectors; and
- Enhance accountabilities through a strengthened evaluation framework.

As the JCSH plans for renewal of its mandate, members can be proud of achievements realized to date. Moving forward, the Consortium can build on this momentum, positively impacting the health and learning outcomes of school-aged children and youth across the country.

### Funding

It is proposed that the present funding formula (unchanged since 2005) remain:

- \$250,000 from the federal government (Public Health Agency of Canada); and
- \$250,000 from PT members (\$2000 fixed amount per jurisdiction and the remainder divided by % per capita).

### Accountability

The 2015-2020 Agreement and Terms of Reference reaffirms a robust accountability framework, providing clear directions regarding roles, responsibilities, and processes.